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# ART NEEDLEWORK

## THE ART OF EMBROIDERY.

### IX.

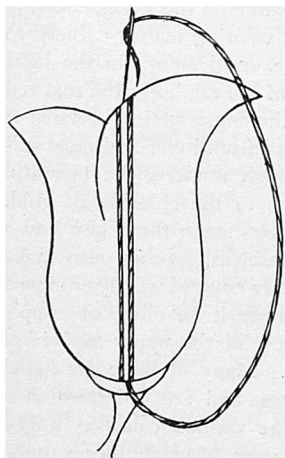


FIG. 28. LAID EMBROIDERY.  
LAYING THE THREADS ALTERNATELY.

containing the worsted, silk or cotton which is being used to produce the decoration is passed through the material on which the decoration is to appear. Whether it is cushion embroidery; or that large class in which the length and direction of the stitches is determined by counting the threads of the warp or woof of the ground; or feather stitch, of which the characteristic is the blending of the stitches into one another, each differing from the other in length, but forming together a whole in which no stitch is distinguishable; or satin stitch, which, in the hands of the Chinese and Japanese, is practically feather stitch; or knotted stitch—in one and all the silk or worsted (yarn, as it is technically called) passes through the ground, and produces the embroidery by the manner in which it is manipulated. We have now to consider the very large class of embroidery which depends on the yarn being laid on the surface of the grounding material, and never passing through it at all, except when it is necessary to begin or finish a needleful, and in some cases at the ends of the rows. This is known as "couched" or laid embroidery. It came into use, as far as we know, when gold and silver thread was first used in embroidery, and was adopted so as to avoid the slightest wasting of the precious material.

The simplest form of laid work is what is technically known as a couched line. A thick strand of worsted or silk is laid on the material, and one end is firmly secured by passing it through the ground or by several close stitches. A needle is threaded with silk or worsted, as the case may be, of ordinary thickness, and while one hand is used on the top of the frame to guide the thick outline the needle is pushed up from below and the thread passed over the couching line and inserted on the other side, so as to hold it firmly to the ground. These fastening stitches, coming from below, are repeated at regular intervals, and it is necessary to have them very evenly spaced and exactly at right angles with the line they cross, or the work will look untidy. This is the whole secret of couched embroidery, although it spreads into an immense number of varieties, and includes all the beautiful

gold stitches used in church work, as well as the extremely decorative silk embroidery for which Italy, Sicily and Spain have been famous.

Couched lines are used chiefly in outline work and for edging the design in appliqué. As an outline (Fig. 29) it is generally bolder and somewhat rougher than a worked outline, and for some purposes is more effective with less expenditure of labor. For large pieces of decoration, such as wall hangings or curtains for a hall or large building, it is very suitable, but not for furniture coverings where much wear is required.

Japanese and Chinese gold can be used in this manner only, owing to the peculiarity of the manufacture, which prevents their being drawn through the material. This Oriental gold thread is made of very thin strips of gold paper twisted round thread or silk. As a general rule, the Chinese, which is a redder tint of gold, is twisted round red silk, and the Japanese round white or yellow cotton. The gold is pure, being absolutely without alloy. It therefore never tarnishes, and for that reason is extremely valuable as giving us a satisfactory gold at a very much lower price than any other gold thread could be produced for. Its disadvantage is the liability of the thread to become untwisted in use and to show the white edges of the paper on which it is laid.

In using Japanese or Chinese thread for couching it is necessary generally to push the end at the beginning and the close of the work through the ground material with a small stiletto, so as not to disturb the twist of the paper. Having firmly secured the end by several stitches close to-

when the intention is that the sewing down of the gold shall be invisible. Sometimes two threads of gold are

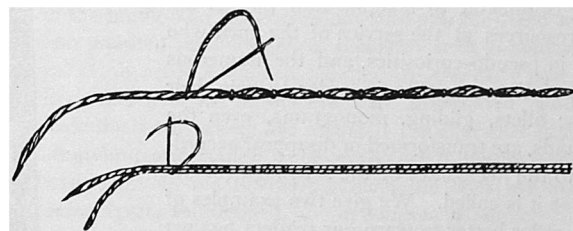


FIG. 29. COUCHED LINES.

SINGLE FOR OUTLINES, AND DOUBLE FOR GOLD WORK.

taken together (Fig. 29) and sewn down with the silk. In guiding this paper gold thread along the outline the

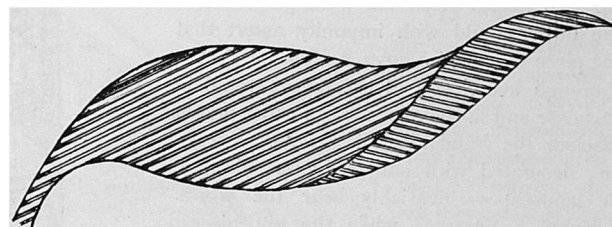


FIG. 30. LAID EMBROIDERY.

FIRST LAYER PLACED DIAGONALLY.

left hand should be used to give it a continual twist, or it is apt to become ragged and untwisted in turning corners. In executing this simple form of couching, either with gold or any other kind of thread, it is needful to be very careful with curves and angles, so as to keep the line perfectly even and correct; and where it is necessary to make a sudden turn the fastening stitches will need to be placed much more closely together. A little practice will soon make apparent, and overcome, the difficulties.

In some cases it is desirable to use silk of a different color for fastening, as a great deal of good decorative effect can be produced in this very simple manner. Couching outlines of narrow ribbon are sometimes found in old needlework, but the effect is always hard and unpleasing, and it is not to be recommended.

Laid embroidery, as it is now called, is formed by threads, generally of silk, placed evenly side by side in straight lines from one extremity of the outline to the other, and fastened down by threads which cross these at right angles and at regular distances, the cross lines being fastened down at intervals by stitches which pass through the ground material. There are therefore no less than three dis-

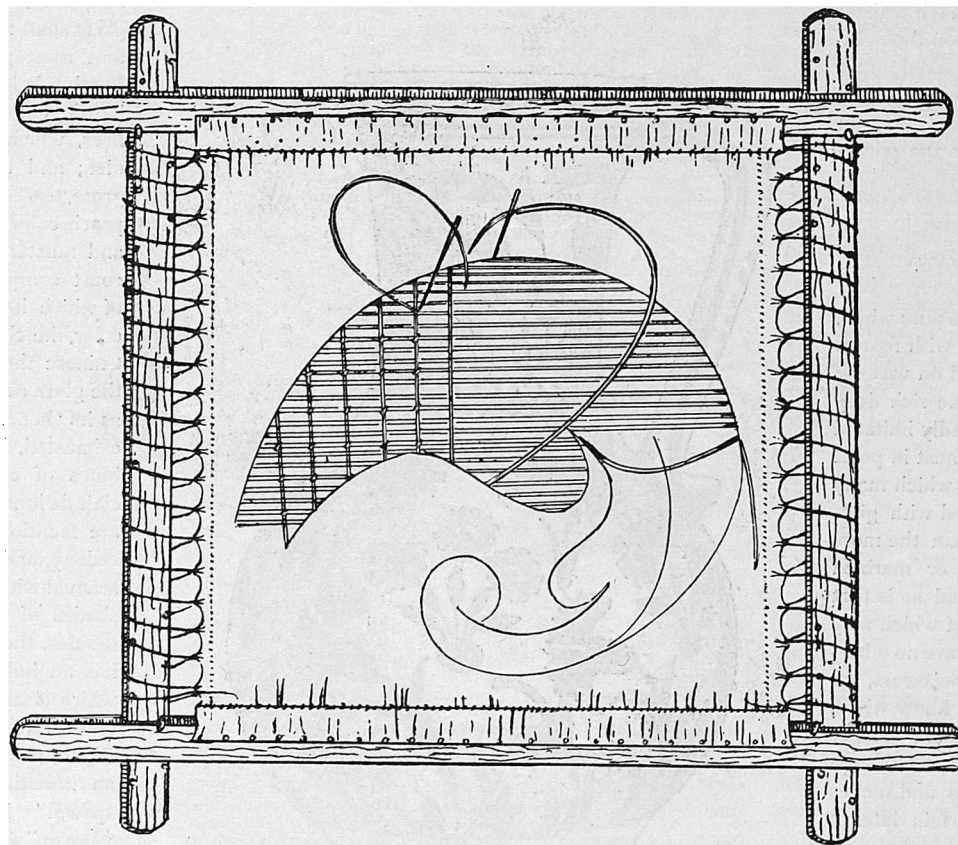


FIG. 31. LAID EMBROIDERY IN HAND FRAME.

gether, the gold thread must be guided along the line to be covered with the left hand, while it is sewed down with very fine silk with the right hand, in the manner already described.

A peculiar kind of silk, made with a very fine, close twist, and dyed exactly to match the color of the gold, and technically known as Maltese silk, should be used

tinctive forms needed to complete this embroidery, as will be clearly understood by a reference to the illustration (Fig. 31).

Supposing that we have a conventionalized design which it is desired to work in this manner, the threads are first laid evenly side by side from end to end of the space to be filled in. Whether they should be taken in

the direction of the warp or woof must depend upon the nature of the design. At the end of each row the needle is passed through to the back and is brought up again not quite close to the spot where it entered the ground, but at a sufficient distance to allow of an intermediate stitch. The thread is then carried back over the surface in a straight line, and the needle inserted at the opposite extremity of the outline. The next line will be laid between the first and second (Fig. 28), and the following one will again leave a space which will be filled up in due course by the return stitch. Thus the threads would be laid in the order of first, third, second, fourth, and so on, the even numbers going from right to left and the odd from left to right, or vice versa, as the case may be. This form of working gives greater steadiness than could be obtained if the threads were laid actually side by side.

It is not always desirable to lay the threads in a straight line from end to end of the portion of the design under consideration; excellent effects are sometimes produced by placing the lines diagonally (as shown in Fig. 30), and where this is the case, it is not necessary to alternate the threads. This is, however, a question of detail, which must be left to the intelligence of the worker, since no hard-and-fast rules can be laid down applicable to every case, and skilful embroiderers constantly vary in minor details as to their manner of working. The end to be obtained is to have this first layer of threads—called in French the “couche,” whence our English corruption of the word—perfectly even and smooth. If either too loosely or too tightly laid the work will look bad when unframed.

Much of the old Italian couched work is beautifully colored, many hued silks blending together in this first “couche.” When this is desired the lines must, of course, not be carried to the outline, but must stop at irregular lengths midway, or at whatever distance is judged best, so as to allow of a thread of another tone being continued from the end. When this is done it should be brought up through the former thread in the same manner as split stitch. The shading or toning of different hues in one petal, however, should be done as far as possible by the choice of the threads laid side by side, not breaking the line except where it cannot be avoided. In ordinary work the layer, or “couche,” is all of a single color.

When it is quite complete, and presents an even, satin-like surface, the second layer begins. Threads of silk or of metal are laid at right angles to the first and secured in exactly the same way, by passing the needle through at each extremity of the outline. They should lie at a distance of from a quarter to half an inch, according to the size of the design, and must be very accurately placed. Unless the worker has an extremely correct eye for judging distance, it is necessary to have a small measure lying by and to see that each crossing line is not only correct as to distance, but is absolutely parallel with the preceding one throughout its length. Any inaccuracy will entirely destroy the beauty of the work.

The second layer of threads being complete, it remains to fasten them. This is done by means of small stitches brought up from the back, which cross the threads of the second layer diagonally. These must be taken at even distances, and as neatly as possible, or they will destroy the good effect of the work. As a general rule, the small fastening stitches should be as nearly invisible as possible, and are therefore chosen of the same color as the threads of the second layer; but this is a matter of detail, which may vary in the different cases. Sometimes the fastening stitches form part of the scheme of coloring, and may then be of some hue that shows distinctly. Again, as a general rule the crossing lines of the second layer are either of a wholly different color or at least shade from the lines of the first layer; but where it is desired to produce a very simple broad effect of perfectly flat decoration, the same colored silk is used in all three operations.

This form of couched embroidery has always been much used in Spain and her colonies, and in Italy, chiefly Sicily and Crete, especially for curtains and hangings of all kinds. It is not sufficiently durable for furniture coverings, as a rule, for the soft, untwisted silk, which is most effective, is apt to wear off and become ragged if exposed to much actual rubbing from use. There is nothing, however, to prevent its being used in ecclesiastical embroidery for altar frontals and antependiums of all kinds. It was much employed in mediæval times in church embroidery for backgrounds for figures, and even for the figures themselves.

L. HIGGIN.

## New Publications.

### INDIAN DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE.

THE many illustrated books, magazine articles and other publications about India, together with the stuffs and rugs and brass ware imported from that country, have given rise to certain popular notions concerning its arts, which, while perhaps not incorrect, are assuredly insufficient. The wood-cut illustrations of books of travels, or even of more serious works, such as Ferguson's book on Hindoo architecture, are more likely to create than to satisfy a desire to know something about the artistic efforts of a people so nearly allied to the principal European races and so interesting in themselves as are the inhabitants of the Indian peninsula. And the few scraps of cloth and bits of brass or carved ivory which, until lately, were all that we could ourselves see, in shops or museums, of the production of East Indian artists, were hardly more containing. India may be said to be the fountain-head of all our pattern designing, and of that of the farther East as well. Her architecture offers more (and more important) problems to the modern investigator than that of any other country. The elegance of some of its forms, the barbarous clumsiness of others, the elaborateness and beauty of its ornamental detail, the variety and abundance of the material which it offers to the inquirer who has the good luck to be able to study it on the spot, make it, to him, an extremely attractive subject of investigation. It is surprising that so few of those who have had this opportunity have seen fit to enable others to join them, by the obvious means of making and publishing a good collection of photographs. This is what Mr. Lockwood de Forest, a New Yorker, who has long resided in India, and who has a practical acquaintance with the Hindoo art of the present day, as well as of the past, has just done. He has issued a volume of magnificent heliotype of well-chosen examples of Indian architectural detail, doorways, windows and house fronts, in carved wood and stone and beaten brass and painted tile work. These are on a sufficiently large scale to show at once clearly the pattern ornamentation, and the architectural disposition of it. We have, for instance, a house at Ahmedabad, with carved doorway and balconied window above and overhanging upper story, in which the distribution of plain and ornamented surfaces can be seen, as well as the character of the ornament. The figures of the owners, standing in the windows, serve to give one the scale of the reduction; and, so presented, the flowery borders that frame in the windows, and the fret-work of pillars and balconies, appear much more life-like than if we had them separately in stiff and inaccurate drawings. A domed window-balcony at Lahore, besides its carved and pierced woodwork, has a fresco of an Indian lover and his lass in a garden of flowering plants in vases. The doorway of a house at Moultan shows panelling and arabesque work, almost Italian in their suave proportions. A brass door at Amritza has a tympanum with carved figures of gods, which also recalls early Italian work, while the painted flower border around it is unmistakably Indian. In fact, every one of the twenty-five plates offers some unexpected beauty, and, altogether, they go farther to give a good idea of the peculiarities of Hindoo art and of its relations to other architectural styles than any set of illustrations which we have heretofore seen. It is only to be regretted that they are not accompanied by the explanatory text, which Mr. De Forest might so well and so easily have added.

### WAUTERS'S HISTORY OF FLEMISH PAINTING.

HITHERTO we have had the history of Flemish painting open with the fifteenth century, and the biography of the brothers Van Eyck. Professor Wauters goes back as far as the thirteenth century to show that even then there were rude colossal frescoes of sacred subjects on the walls of the Hospital of the Bylogue at Ghent, and of a somewhat later date is a far better fresco in an ancient chapel in the same town, representing the guild of cross-bowmen of St. George. It was characteristic of these and other early paintings in the Netherlands, both of pictures and frescoes, that they had no relationship with the Byzantine and symbolical art which was still extending its influence over the rest of civilized Europe, and of which the paintings in the old Romanesque cathedrals in Germany and the Madonnas of Cimabue in Italy, are the principal monuments. The work of the earliest known Flemish artists had an essentially Flemish character.

After the manner of Henri Taine, our author divides the history of Flemish painting into six great periods. The first period begins with these frescoes, covering the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and the early part of the fifteenth century, when we hear of Jehan de Bruges, painter to King Charles V. of France, who executed miniatures which adorn a “Bible historée,” now in the Westreelanum Museum of the Hague. That he is referred to by his contemporaries as “pictor,” while if a mere miniaturist he would have been called “illuminator,” satisfies our author that Jehan painted pictures; but not one of these paintings is in existence.

The second period—that of the Gothic school—extending over nearly the whole of the fifteenth century and somewhat beyond, was the immediate result of a great development in the prosperity, wealth, and intellect of the country, under the magnificent reign of Philip the Good. This monarch was the friend and patron of Jean Van Eyck, never to be forgotten as really the founder of painting as we understand that term to-day. Not only was he the first to use oil as a medium, but, as Fromentin tells us, “under his brush the art of painting reached its highest perfection.” Professor Wauters, in his opening chapter, laughs at the idea that Flemish art began with the brothers Van Eyck, “springing up in Bruges ripe and virile from its birth, like Minerva issuing ready armed from the forehead of Jupiter;” but does he not practically admit as much when he says: “Jean Van Eyck created Flemish art. He made it real, deep, energetic, full of expression and splendor: he invented aerial landscape and perspective; he was the first to give an accurate and handsome form to man, animals, flowers, and all accessories. His design is firm, patient, and studied; his coloring rich, abundant, and severe; his composition masterly, and his modelling, simplicity, and firmness are inimitable.” When we remember that in the train of this wonderful man were his brother Hubert, Van der Weyden, Van der Goes, Cristus, Bouts, Memling, Gheerardt David, Jérôme Bosch, and Quentin Metsys, one realizes how brilliant was this second period. With the sixteenth century foreign influence began to be felt in the art of the Netherlands. As the frontiers of the country were extended by the marriage of Mary of Burgundy with Maximilian of Austria, and by the union of Philip le Beau with Jeanne of Aragon, so was the domain of intellectual and material activity, and the changed political relations brought to the North the taste and models of the South. In this, the third period of their artistic development, we see the last of the Gothic painters. As Italy had once accepted the artistic yoke of Greece, now the Low Countries yielded to the enchantment of Florence and Rome. Flemish painters went to Italy, where generally they lost the qualities of their national art without acquiring those of the land of their sojourning. Landscape and genre now appearing for the first time remained unimpaired and in portraiture, with leaders like Pourbus the elder—last of the great painters of the school of Bruges—Martin de Vos, and Joost Van Clève, they maintained their own. With such names as these are linked those of Paul

Bril, Giles Van Coninxloo, Blès, and Gassel, on the one hand, Peter Breughel the elder, the Van Valkenborgs, and Beuckelaer on the other, supplying the intermediate but wholly Flemish chain which unites Cristus and Jérôme Bosch to Teniers, Brauwer, de Vadder, and d'Arthois.

The fourth period, occupying the greater part of the seventeenth century, comprises the birth and culmination of the glorious school of Rubens. The Spanish Low Countries were now an independent state, and the mild rule of the Archduke Albert and his consort Isabel had succeeded the massacres of the Duke of Alva, while a worldly and tolerant priesthood had taken the place of the relentless Inquisition. With the nation's return to peace and material prosperity came Rubens and the brilliant throng of artists who were his contemporaries. This was the time of Jordaens, Van Dyck, Snijders, the de Vos, Teniers, the Breughels, de Crayer, Quellyn, Seghers, Rombouts, Schut, Van Utrecht, Van Hoecke, Peeters, and the Huysmans, Meert, Sallaert, de Vadder, the Van Oosts, Jean Van Clève, Brauwer and Craesbecke, and abroad Flemish art was represented by Pourbus, Champagne, Van der Meulen, and Boel in France; Van Somer and Sieberechts in England; Francis Luyx in Austria, and Suttermans, Jean Miel and Liévin Méhus in Italy. With the death of Albert, who, with Isabel, had done something to advance the interests of art, the land fell once more under the deadly yoke of Spain; this galaxy of stars faded out of sight with none to take their places. The Renaissance of Flemish art, apparently, had reached its limits.

With the fifth period, which Professor Wauters begins just before the eighteenth century decay set in, Belgium had become the battlefield of Europe, the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, the English, and the Germans in turns occupying its devastated territories, which were finally ceded to Austria in 1713. “When the soldiers of the Convention invaded the Austrian Netherlands, Flemish art was no more, and it was not given to the Republic, to the Emperor Napoleon, or to King William to revive it.”

The sixth period of Flemish art opens with the Revolution of 1830, which made Belgium an independent kingdom. It is under the influence of the French school, our author tells us, that the Flemish artists have gradually gained strength, and “participated in all the great international competitions called into existence by the cosmopolitanism of the age.” Might he not go much farther and say truly that there is nothing left of the old Flemish school, and that what he calls neo-Flemish art is as absolutely Parisian as the language and the habits of the people of Brussels to-day? We accept his record of the Belgian school of the nineteenth century with the names of Navez, Wappers, Gallait, Leys, Madou, the brothers Stevens, Fourmois, Verlat, De Winne, Clays, Boulanger, Verwée, Henri de Braekeleer, Agneessens, Hermans, and Emile Wauters; but is there anything, one may well ask, beyond the accident of birth, which should distinguish these men as belonging to any school outside of France? Might not, indeed, a close parallel be drawn between the relation of Belgian and French art of to-day and that of the Dutch and Flemish in the fifteenth century, when the artists, both of Holland and the Netherlands, “sought inspiration from the same sources, and were guided by the lessons of the same master?”

This volume is the second of the admirable “Fine Art Library” series, published by Cassell & Co. The original work was crowned by the Royal Belgian Academy. Mrs. Henry Rosset's translation is all that could be desired. The illustrations of the book are numerous, and, considering its cheapness, are satisfactory.

## Correspondence.

### REGARDING CHINA PAINTING.

H. T., Albany, finds that, on having her decorated china fired, parts of the color “blister and flake off,” and asks for the cause and the remedy. The trouble may be due to using too much flux or to putting on too thickly some color which should be used thinly. There is no remedy. To paint over the blistered parts and fire the piece again would only aggravate the case.

H. S. T., Toledo, O.—The effect of transparency produced by the vitrification of the colors in firing will to a certain extent clear up the muddiest painting; but to obtain the full brilliancy and best effect of the colors, they must not be overworked. All teasing or overworking of the colors tends to loss of clearness and brilliancy in the painting. Before you touch your work, think what you desire to do, and then endeavor to accomplish it with as little circumspection and hesitation as possible. Do not lay the color in little dabbling strokes, but with a firm, free touch.

### SHADING DRAPERIES IN FAN-PAINTING.

ASTRA, Brooklyn.—Complementary colors should be used in shading the dresses or draperies; red may be shaded with green, yellow with violet, ultramarine blue with orange, orange with blue, violet with Indian yellow, cobalt blue with ochre; carmine may be shaded with light emerald green, emerald green with violet blue, and lemon yellow with lilac, made of pink and light blue. The grays shade all colors. Black is shaded with white, and white with black. All colors must be mixed with white. More white must be used on textile fabrics than on paper.

### TO PAINT BARBERIES IN OILS.

BISHOP, Troy, N. Y.—For the berries mix vermilion and carmine; shade with carmine and brown madder or Rubens madder. The berries in the strongest lights should have more vermilion, especially in the highest lights. Berries behind or in the background paint in crimson lake shaded as above. Use for the foliage zinobor greens 1, 2, and 3, Indian yellow, indigo and Vandyck brown. Paint the stems in Vandyck brown, white, and a little indigo.

### TO PAINT PEACH BLOSSOMS IN OILS.

A. T., Santa Barbara.—Use German rose madder; for shadows, white, ivory black and yellow ochre, with a touch of the rose madder; for high lights, white and rose madder, with a touch of cadmium yellow. Wild roses may be painted with the same colors. For yellow peaches use cadmium yellow and white; shade with burnt umber and carmine tempered with the local tint; for high lights use white, ivory black and a very little burnt Sienna.

### TAPESTRY PAINTING.

ASPER, Boston.—The albumen process is one of the oldest known, and it is generally agreed that the famous painted tapestries at the Hôtel Dieu at Rheims were executed by some such means. The ordinary colors employed are earths, ochres and lakes, reduced to impalpable powder and ground up with white of egg. For spreading these colors on the canvas, the whites of eggs are beaten up and mixed with an equal quantity of water, until the whole becomes a thick froth, which is allowed to settle. When the painting is finished it is next washed over with a solution of acetic acid or vinegar diluted with water, or it is subjected to a heat of one hundred and forty degrees Fahrenheit, to coagulate the albumen contained in the painting, and thereby fix it.